

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) An automated method for referring a prospective customer to one or more prospective dealers of automobiles and/or automobile services comprising:

a) prompting the prospective customer to enter customer information about the prospective customer;

b) receiving customer information about the prospective customer;

c) querying a database using the received customer information that contains:

1) dealer information about the identity and location of a plurality of dealers of automobiles and/or automobile services; and

2) contact information about prior contacts in the database between the prospective customer and dealers in the database, including information about the type of contact; and

d) locating in the database two or more dealers with whom the prospective customer has had different types of prior contacts; and

e) reporting delivering the results of the query to the prospective customer, including a delivering information to the prospective customer about one or more of the located dealers, giving preference to the dealer or dealers with whom the customer has prior contacts of one of the types.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the customer information includes at least a portion of the prospective customer's address.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the customer information includes at least one from the group consisting of the prospective customer's name, address, zip code, city or state.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~5~~ wherein a prior selling relationship is given the preference highest in the hierarchy of prior contacts.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~5~~ wherein a prior service relationships are is given a lower preference below all selling relationships in the hierarchy.

9. (Canceled)

10. The method of claim 1 ~~wherein a list of the dealers of automobiles and/or automobile services nearest to the customer is returned if there are no prior contacts found further comprising:~~

a) repeating steps (a) – (c) in connection with a different prospective customer;

b) failing to locate in the database any prior contact in the database that the different prospective customer has had with any of the dealers;

c) locating in the database one or more dealers that are near the different prospective customer; and

d) delivering information to the different prospective customer about at least one of the dealers that are near the different prospective customer.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the results are divided into a plurality of sets.

12. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein each set lists dealers of a particular type of prior contact.

13. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein one set of results is viewed at a time.

14. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein a set of results has a link leading to the next possible set of results.

15. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11 wherein sets are displayed in order of the preference hierarchy.

16. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein each dealer listed in the set has a link for displaying a map of its location.

17. (Original) The method of claim 11 wherein each dealer listed in the set has a link for displaying directions to its location.

18. (Currently amended) The method of claim 14 wherein the locating locates two or more prior contacts of the same type on different dates and wherein the delivering gives preference to the prior contact with the most recent date within the two or more prior contacts of the same type a set lists dealers with the most recent prior contacts listed first.

19. (Currently amended) The method of claim 18 wherein the giving preference includes highlighting a set highlights the prior contact with the most recent date most recent dealer with a prior contact.

20. (Currently amended) A system for referring a prospective customer to one or more prospective dealers of automobiles and/or automobile services, the system comprising:

- a) a remote client enabling the prospective customer to enter customer information about the prospective customer;
- b) a central computer/server to receive the information;
- c) a database configured with to:

1) dealer information about the identity and location of a plurality of dealers of automobiles and/or automobile services; and

2) contact information about prior contacts between one or more of the dealers and one or more prospective customers, including information about the type of contact;

d) a processor for querying the database and delivering the generating results to the prospective customer in a manner that gives preference to prior contacts of one type as compared to another type, between the prospective customer and dealers; and

e) means for transmitting results to the remote client.

21. (Original) The system of claim 20 wherein the remote client is configured with an Internet browser having forms capabilities.

22. (Currently amended) The system of claim 20 furthering comprising wherein the means for transmitting the results is over the Internet.

23. (Currently amended) An automated method for referring a prospective customers to one or more prospective dealers comprising:

a) prompting a first the prospective customer to enter customer information about the first prospective customer;

b) receiving customer information about the first prospective customer;

c) querying a database using the received customer information from the first customer that contains:

(1) dealer information about the identity and location of a plurality of dealers; and

(2) contact information about prior contacts between one or more of the dealers and one or more prospective customers, the query generating at least one prior contact results that give preference to prior contacts in the database between the first prospective customer and at least one of the dealers in the database; and

d) reporting information about at least one of the dealers that have had a prior contact with the first prospective customer the results of the query to the first prospective customer;

e) prompting a second prospective customer to enter customer information about the second prospective customer;

f) receiving customer information about the second prospective customer;

c) querying the database using the customer information from the second customer; the query failing to generate any prior contact between the second prospective customer and any of dealers in the database; and

locating one or more dealers that are near the location of the second prospective customer; and

e) delivering information about at least one of the dealers that are near the second prospective customer to the second prospective customer.

24. (Currently amended) The method of claim 23-wherein the customer information about the first or the second prospective customer comprises the prospective customer's address and zip code.

25. (Currently amended) The method of claim 23 wherein the customer information about the first or the second prospective customer includes at least one from the group consisting of the prospective customer's name, address, zip code, city or state.

26. (Currently amended) The method of claim 23 wherein there are is a plurality of types of prior contacts.

27. (Currently amended) The method of claim 23 wherein the querying using customer information from the first customer results in contacts with different dealers of different types and wherein the delivering information to the first customer gives preference to one of the types of contacts. there is a hierarchy within the plurality of types of prior contacts.

28. (Currently amended) The method of claim 23 wherein a list of the dealers nearest to the second customer is returned if there are no prior contacts found.

29. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein the results are divided into a plurality of sets.

30. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein each set lists dealers of a particular type of prior contact.

31. (Original) The method of claim 30 wherein one set of results is viewed at a time.

32. (Original) The method of claim 30 wherein a set of results has a link leading to the next possible set of results.

33. (Currently amended) The method of claim 30 wherein sets are displayed in order of the preference hierarchy.

34. (Original) The method of claim 30 wherein each dealer listed in the set has a link for displaying a map of its location.

35. (Original) The method of claim 30 wherein each dealer listed in the set has a link for displaying directions to its location.

36. (Original) The method of claim 30 wherein a set lists dealers with the most recent prior contacts listed first.

37. (Currently amended) The method of claim 30 wherein a set highlights the ~~most recent~~ dealer with the most recent a-prior contact.

38. (New) A system for referring a prospective customer to one or more sellers comprising:

a database system configured to look into a database to locate information about prior contacts the prospective customer has had with the sellers; and

a reporting system configured to provide information to the prospective customer about at least one of the sellers with whom the customer has had a prior contact, giving preference to the seller with whom the prospective customer has had a prior contact of one type when the customer has had prior contacts of different types with two or more of the sellers.

39. (New) A system for referring a prospective customer to one or more sellers comprising:

a database system configured to identify at least one seller with whom the prospective customer has had at least one prior contact and at least one seller that is near to the prospective customer; and

a reporting system configured to provide information to the prospective customer about at least one of the identified sellers, giving preference to the seller with whom the customer has had a prior contact, if such a seller is identified by the database system.